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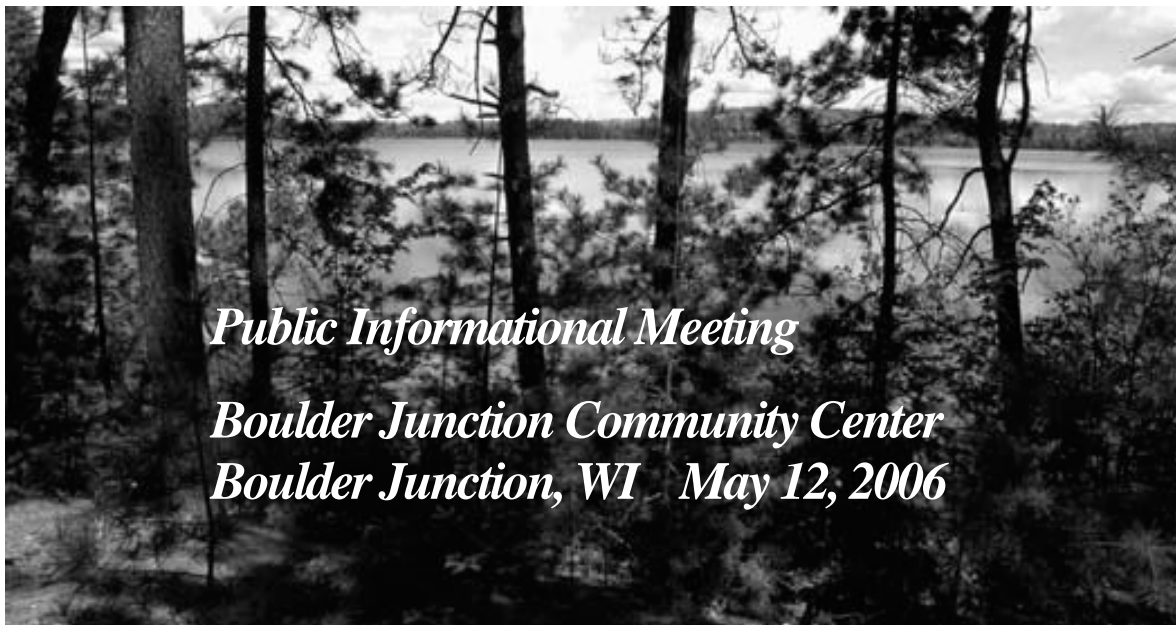
*Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest
Wis. Dept. of Natural Resources Service Center
8770 Highway J
Woodruff, WI 54568*

715 / 356-5211

State Forest Semi-Annual Report 2006

Northern Highland - American Legion State Forest

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Public Informational Meeting

Boulder Junction Community Center

Boulder Junction, WI May 12, 2006

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MANAGEMENT UPDATES

Forestry

Jeff Olsen

The winter of 2005/2006 was below average for snowfall and warmer than usual. The forestry staff hardly had use of their snowshoes. The winter logging activity was very light and gave us time for inventory and new sale establishment fieldwork. The addition of 2 LTEs in forestry gave us a boost in productive fieldwork. Spring and early summer are the busiest time of the year for timber production. Much of the staff's time is now spent in sale contract administration and site visits. The completion of the NHAL Master Plan is welcome! We have a great guidance document to focus our management objectives.

The forestry staff on the NHAL now has all positions filled and we had 2 LTE foresters to help out with catch up of our fieldwork inventory. At full staffing we are Forestry Supervisor, Jeffrey Olsen, six Senior-Foresters, Dean Farr, Cal Doering, Paul Schultz, Craig Dalton, Todd Anderson and Jim Wetterau. We do have a new Forester position, Paul Streans coming in June to join the team. One Forestry Technician-Advanced, Roberta Kunzman has left the Forest for another job in March. Our Financial Program Assistant is Marci Jahns. Our three forestry LTEs are, Molly Martin, Brian Loyd and Kevin McCullough. That is our team and we also get help from Area Rangers and Technicians that contribute to our operations on the Forest.

The NHAL State Forest holds two bid openings each year to sell our timber sales. The first weeks in May and November are our target dates. In 2005 we sold 32 tracts of 3993 acres that held an estimated 60,233 cords for a value of \$3,557,810. These sales have 1, 2 or 3 year contracts for completion. We close out and track revenues and sale completion acres on active sales annually. Markets, weather and access can all effect when sales get worked on and completed. Revenues for 2005 were \$3,031,791. This also includes timber sales, firewood, Christmas trees, boughs and misc. sale permits.

Tree planting and site preparation acres in 2005 were 400. We are planning for about 222 acres in 2006 summer planting. We hand plant all trees on sites that are disk trenched for jack pine, red pine and white pine. The target is for 910 trees planted per acre.

Maintenance and Development

Bob Schepper

This year was exceptionally busy on the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest. We had a very busy camping season. Again this year the Sprite crew was used to assist with water and land based trails. We were lucky to have another Boy Scout troop assist with trail and campsite improvements, as well as use of several days of work from some of the local youth camps. The McNaughton prison crew has been assisting in many projects from lawn care to tree removal. Every spring the Eagle River High School sends a group of students to us for a day to assist with clean up.

Major projects completed were replacing and or repairing roofs on toilet buildings throughout the forest. The Carrol Lake toilets were replaced with one building. Additional campsite encroachment work that was done included installing barriers at some sites as well as transplanting approximately 500 conifer trees in Clear Lake, Crystal Lake and Razorback Lake campgrounds. The planting of Dog Wood and Hazel Nut was also completed. Most of the small shrubs did not survive the hard use of summer. We also replaced all of the storm windows on the Trout Lake buildings with much more efficient windows. There is a major project for work on the woman's dormitory. We will be replacing windows, painting the building and doing structural repair to the back porch. We have been doing a significant amount of tree removal in our campgrounds. The stress from the amount of use in these sites is starting to take a toll and has caused us to step up on our hazard tree removal. The McNaughton crew is also doing logging at Starette Lake campground. The decision to do this was made to protect the area from potential mechanical damage.

The Sport Fisheries crew continues to remain busy repairing docks, launches and parking areas. Each year several landings are chosen and black top is replaced on these. The crew will continue to keep the landings in tip top shape.

ACCOMPLISHMENT GOALS 2006-2007

All inspections will be done as required. We will be using project monies to resurface Cunard Lake Road, create ADA accessible paths to several toilet buildings on the forest, and work on more campsite encroachment problems, water trail improvements, Raven Trail improvements for mountain bikes, hazard tree removal and other land trail improvements. We will continue to merge the Rainbow Flowage into our program as needs are recognized. There will be unknown challenges in the next year and we look forward to meeting them head on.

Real Estate Program

Sonja Margitan

LAND MANAGEMENT HISTORY

The nucleus area of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest has been under conservation forest protection longer than any other forested area in the state. “In 1904, the Commissioners of Public Lands, in accordance with the laws of 1903 (the first forestry law), set aside a forest reserve of some 40,000 acres in Forest, Oneida and Vilas Counties. In 1904, upon my (E.M. Griffith’s) request, the Commissioners of Public Lands added 20,000 acres in Iron County. The legislature of 1905 added to the state forest reserve, all state lands north of Town 33, and in June 1906, Congress passed Senator LaFollette’s bill granting to the State of Wisconsin for forestry purposes, 20,000 acres of vacant government land. Thus, in a little over two years, the forest reserves have grown from 40,000 to 254,072 acres.

The preceding was taken from the first report of the State Forester, E.M. Griffith, in 1906, published in the NH-AL State Forest 1982 Master Plan. It briefly covers the beginning of the state forests systems, as we know them today.



From these forest reserve lands, the state legislature established the Northern Highland State Forest in 1925, and the American Legion State Forest in 1929. They were managed as separate properties until 1968 when they were combined into one administrative unit for economic reasons.

Today, the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest is Wisconsin’s largest state owned property. A new acquisition goal of 291,200

acres was approved in the new Master Plan by the Natural Resources Board in October 2005. The state forest owns approximately 231,000 acres. Privately owned or other lands are also contained within our pristine forest.

LAND MANAGEMENT

Because of the size and complexity of this property, a Land Control Specialist is on staff at the Trout Lake Forestry Headquarters in Boulder Junction. The purpose of this position is to advise the Forest Superintendent on land control issues and keep the Superintendent apprised of all land program initiatives.

Other primary land control duties include:

- Administration of private landowners contacts for acquisition of land within the forest boundaries.
- Complete necessary property and boundary inspections required and resolve land trespass issues.
- Represent the forest on all questions regarding land-surveying disputes and administer and process contracts for private surveying services.
- Process all land covenants such as easements, access permits and land use agreements affecting the NH-AL State Forest.

The NH-AL State Forest receives many requests for easements, permits and land use agreements, which can restrict the Department's future management options, limit the public's full use and enjoyment of the land, and prevent natural succession of cover types. Requests on Department property are carefully considered and discouraged where practical alternatives are available. All requests deserve careful consideration, on how public use and future management of the land may be affected.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS 2005-2006

The end of 2005 was very busy in the NH-AL State Forest and 2006 is starting off just the same. Listed below are a few of the bigger transactions processed.

- ❖ Renewed Camp American Legion's Lease.
- ❖ Amended North Lakeland Discovery Center's Lease
- ❖ Processed a new Land Use Agreement with the Town of Plum Lake to cover an old foot path known today as the "Trampers Trail", which runs mostly around Star Lake and Ballard Lake.
- ❖ Renewed a Land Use Agreement with the Town of Plum Lake for the Picnic Area off Star Lake. A new attraction that will be installed this year is a community-barrier free fishing pier, which was donated by the Star Lakers Club.
- ❖ Renewing a Land Use Agreement with the State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction for the purpose of maintaining a camp off Jag Lake in Boulder Junction to promote development, recreation and conservation practices for Local Future Farmers of America Chapters. This agreement dates back to 1938.

A couple of major projects that are in the planning stages:

- ❖ Town of Boulder Junction is proposing a Winter Park Project. This would be a public outdoor recreational facility that will include a heated pavilion, a lighted ice skating rink, lighted parking lot and a one mile hiking/cross-country ski trail.
- ❖ Tri-Town Paved Bike Trail in Vilas County is being proposed by the Townships of Manitowish Waters, Winchester and Presque Isle. The trail would link the three townships, running mostly within the right-of-way of County Highway W.

Projects scheduled for construction this year:

- ❖ Phase 1 of St. Germain's paved bike trail is scheduled to be completed this summer. The trail starts at the St. Germain Chamber of Commerce, near the intersection of Hwy. 155 & 70 East running west to CTH C, then the trail runs north along CTH C to Mood Rd. Phase 2 is proposed for future construction (pending funding) and will continue along Mood Rd. (on the west side of CTH C) and run north along Plum Creek Ave. to Hwy. 155. This second phase will link the paved bike trail to Sayner.

Completed projects:

- ❖ Plum Lake's paved bike trail was constructed last year which connects with the Boulder Junction paved bike trail, from Crystal Lake/Muskellunge Campgrounds, running along old CTH N & CTH N to Hwy. 155 (downtown Sayner).

Real Estate Acquisition:

Landowners within the state forest boundary will be contacted periodically by Department staff to explain the Department's land acquisition program and to see if they have an interest in selling their property.

Acquisition priorities within the state forest vary from year to year based on a variety of factors, such as resource management or recreation needs and available funding, but acquisition is always based on the landowner's willingness to sell or donate their property.

Recently, the NH-AL State Forest acquired 80 more acres in the Town of Sugar Camp.

Master Plan

Bob Dall

In October of 2005, the State Forest Master Plan was approved by the Natural Resource Board. The plan is the result of comprehensive resource assessments and extensive public involvement.

The Department is committed to working with citizens and businesses alike to manage the NH-AL in a sustainable manner for current and future generations — an approach that incorporates ecological, economic and social values.

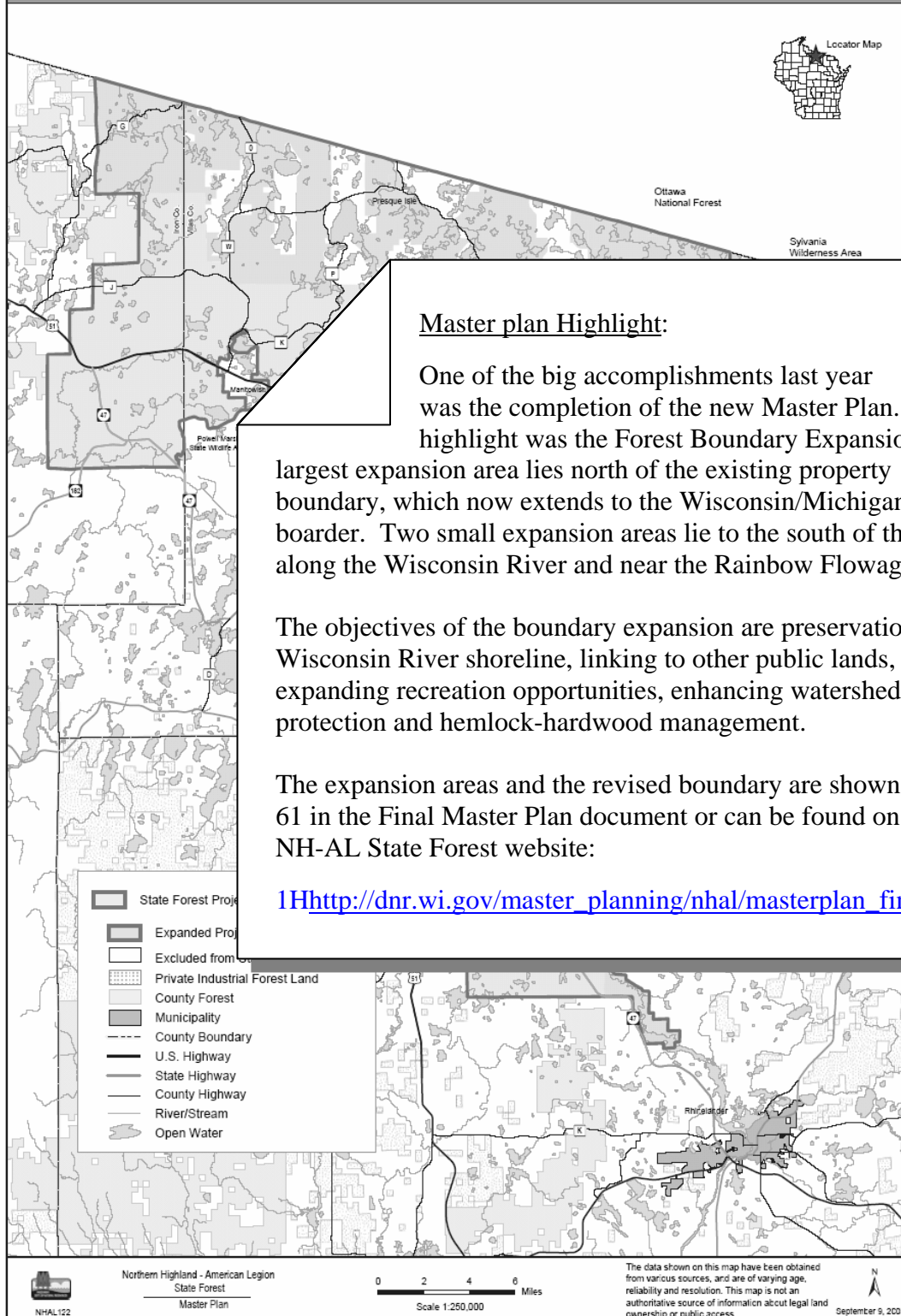
Forest staff have begun integrating various objectives into their regular work. An implementation plan is being developed to track accomplishments and identify opportunities to incorporate master plan goals into work planning and schedules.

One recent example of master plan implementation is the development of a Sustainable ATV Trail Stakeholders group. An organizational meeting was held on May 9 and the group will have one year to complete its charge of bringing a trail recommendation to the Department.

The NH-AL Master Plan is designed to inform both general and technical readers about the future use and management of the forest. The master plan can be viewed on the NH-AL web site at:

http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/master_planning/nhal/

Map 61. Northern Highland / American Legion State Forest
Planned Boundary Expansion



Fishery Surveys

Steve Gilbert

Northern Highland American Legion State Forest Fisheries activities 2005 - 06

The uniquely abundant water resources in the state forest provide for a wide range of fish communities. This resource attracts a diverse group of anglers that play a major role in how we manage these waters. Native American treaty harvest rights also play a role in how these resources are managed. Management goals and activities for these waters vary by the type of water and angling potential.

During the past year and a half, department fisheries staff as well as University and Federal crews conducted numerous fisheries surveys of the lakes within the forest boundaries. Four types of lake surveys were conducted by the department to assess the health of these fisheries.

1. Comprehensive

An extensive survey of the entire fish community. Population estimates of the major gamefish present are calculated and relative abundance of all other species determined. This involves a wide range of sampling gear from Ice out through the fall of the year.

2. Monitoring

These surveys are part of a statewide program to sample all lakes greater than 100 acres by 2009. This type of survey is less intense than a comprehensive survey. Sampling occurs in mid August and again in the fall. The goal of these surveys is to inventory species present and get relative abundance data on game species.

3. Recruitment

This type of survey is conducted to evaluate the annual recruitment levels of important gamefish species in area lakes. Sampling effort consists of a one night electrofishing run covering the entire shoreline of the lake. From this type of survey we can determine the extent of natural reproduction or stocking success.

4. Creel

Involves contacting anglers on a lake from opening day in May until March first of the following year. From this type of survey we get valuable information on the number, size, and species of fish caught by anglers. We also get data on angling effort and pressure. This data helps us determine angler activities and allows us to evaluate or propose regulation changes.

NHAL Lakes Surveyed During the 2005 – Spring 2006 Seasons by WDNR

Year	County	Lake	Survey Type
2005	Oneida	Bird	Recruitment
		Carrol/Madeline	Comprehensive/Creel
		Clear	Comprehensive/Creel
	Vilas	Gilmore	Recruitment
		Tomahawk	Muskellunge
		Big (Hwy K)	Muskellunge
		Big Arbor Vitae	Comprehensive/Creel
		Big St. Germain	Monitoring
		Content	Monitoring
		Dead Pike	Comprehensive/Creel
		Found	Monitoring
		Laura	Monitoring
		Little Bass	Monitoring
		Little St. Germain	Monitoring
		Lost	Monitoring
		Lost Canoe	Comprehensive
		Mantowish Chain	Muskellunge
		Papoose	Muskellunge
		Partridge	Monitoring
		Plum	Monitoring
		Razorback	Monitoring
		Sparkling	Recruitment
		Star	Comprehensive/Creel
		Trout	Recruitment
		White Sand	Comprehensive
		Lt. St. Germain	Monitoring
2006	Oneida	Clear	Muskellunge
		Gilmore	Recruitment
		North Nokomis	Comprehensive/Creel
	Vilas	Tomahawk	Muskellunge
		Two Sisters	Muskellunge
		Big (Hwy K)	Muskellunge
		Big Arbor Vitae	Muskellunge
		Plum	Comprehensive/Creel
		Snipe	Comprehensive/Creel
		Sparkling	Comprehensive/Creel
		Star	Muskellunge
		Towanda	Recruitment
		White Sand (Hwy K)	Muskellunge

Additional lakes will be surveyed in the fall of 2006 as part of monitoring and recruitment work. Copies of the results of these surveys are available to the public and can be obtained by contacting:

Vilas County

Steve Gilbert
8770 Hwy J
Woodruff, WI 54568
715-358-9229

Oneida County

John Kubisiak
107 Sutliff Ave
Rhinelander, WI 54501
715-365-8919

Treaty Fisheries

Mike Cushon
8770 Co Hwy J
Woodruff, WI 54568
715-358-9209

Fish Stocking

Both Streams and lakes in the forest are stocked with cold (brook, brown, and lake trout) and cool (walleye, muskellunge) water species of fish. Most of these fish are produced locally at our hatchery in Woodruff, Wisconsin. The limited number of brook and brown trout we stock come from the state hatchery in Brule, Wisconsin. A Complete listing of the waters and species stocked can be obtained from the Woodruff service Center or on line at the department web site www.dnr.state.wi.gov.

Naturalist Program

Anne Small

With a goal of educating the public about the ecological, economic and social benefits of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL), our Naturalist Program tries to incorporate all of these ideas into fun and interesting programs for our visitors. For the upcoming summer we already have a full schedule of programs, including many guest presenters, on a wide variety of topics, ranging from ephemeral pond ecology to wild and medicinal plants. These programs take place at Crystal and Clear Lake Campgrounds, as well as various other locations throughout the NHAL.

Nestled within the Crystal Lake Campground is our exceptional Crystal Lake Nature Center, where there are a variety of educational displays and activities for the entire family. Visitors can view a multitude of animal mounts and aquariums with live fauna, as well as find interesting facts about wildlife that lives in our area. Some of the new displays this year include invasive forest pests and forest management.

Within the NHAL there are also five interpretive trails for those who would like to take a self-guided tour of the forest landscape. The trails traverse varied terrain and expose the visitor to a wide range of natural habitats.



For additional information about activities, events and opportunities in the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest contact:

**Dept. of Natural Resources Service Center
8770 Highway J
Woodruff, WI 54568**

715-356-5211

Or visit these web pages...

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/StateForests/SF-NH-AL/>

http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/master_planning/nhal/



Photos: WDNR